

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-15 RSC-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-15 PRS-01

DRC-01 /108 W

----- 114612

R 011828Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3661

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

EC BRUSSELS UNN

USMISSION USNATO

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX BY POUCH

AMCONSUL LYON BY POUCH

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL NICE BY POUCH

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH CANTONAL ELECTIONS

REF: PARIS 25006

1. SUMMARY. VOTING IN SECOND ROUND OF CANTONAL ELECTIONS,
SEPT 30, CONFIRMED TRENDS SEEN IN FIRST ROUND VOTING: MASSIVE
ABSTENTION RATE, GAINS OF LEFT AND ESPECIALLY OF SOCIALISTS (PS).

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THOUGH LEFT WILL ATTEMPT TREAT RESULTS AS "DEFEAT" FOR GOF, FACT

THAT MOST RACES DECIDED ON LOCAL ISSUES REDUCES VALUE OF LESSONS THAT CAN BE DRAWN FROM RESULTS. NEVERTHELESS, PS SHOWING BOUND TO ENHANCE FIRST SECRETARY MITTERRAND'S IMAGE. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH ALL BUT 30 OF TOTAL 1988 SEATS REPORTED (ALL 30 FROM OVERSEAS DISTRICTS), FINAL RETURNS AFTER SECOND ROUND GIVES FOLLOWING BREAKDOWN FOR DEPARTMENTAL COUNCILS (EXCLUDING PARIS WHICH HAS NO COUNCIL): PS GAINS 123, NOW HAS 422; COMMUNISTS (PC) UP 73 TO 213; LEFT RADICALS UP 11 TO 68; DIVERSE LEFT (MOSTLY INDEPENDENTS, SOME FAR LEFT) DOWN 21 TO 179; EXTREME LEFT (PSU, ETC.) UP 1 TO 14; REFORMERS UP 1 TO 122; UDR UP 45 TO 255; INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS UP 11 TO 153; CDP UP 13 TO 60; DIVERSE MAJORITY (UNAFFILIATED, VOTE WITH MAJORITY) UP 75 TO 379; AND DIVERSE OPPOSITION DOWN 6 TO 93. THUS, OF TOTAL 1958 SEATS REPORTED, MAJORITY PARTIES AND RIGHT OF CENTER IDENPENDENTS WON 847 SEATS OR 43.4 PERCENT WHILE UNITED LEFT AND OTHER LEFT OF CENTER CANDIDATES WON 896 OR 46 PERCENT. THE OPPOSITION CENTER (REFORMISTS AND INDEPENDENTS) WON THE OTHER 10.6 PERCENT. AT 45 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE, THE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS WAS NEARLY AS HIGH AS IN THE FIRST ROUND AND THAT DESPITE THE FACT THAT LEADERS OF ALL PARTIES URGED THEIR SUPPORTERS TO VOTE.

3. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO MAKE COMPARISONS BETWEEN THIS AND PREVIOUS CANTONAL ELECTIONS BECAUSE OF THE CREATION OF 318 NEW ELECTORAL DISTRICTS, NEARLY ALL IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN AREAS. NOT SURPRISINGLY, PS AND PC CANDIDATES TOOK VAST MAJORITY OF THESE NEW SEATS. NO FIGURE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE WAS DEFEATED IN HIS BID FOR ELECTION AS MEMBER OF A DEPARTMENTAL COUNCIL.

4. INSOFAR AS NATIONAL IMPLICATION CAN BE DRAWN, THE PS WAS THE BIG GAINER FROM THE CANTONAL ELECTIONS. THE SOCIALISTS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED THEIR REPRESENTATION, TAKING VOTES FROM BOTH THE PC AND THE CENTER. ELECTIONS GIVE FIRST SECRETARY MITTERRAND NEW CONFIDENCE AND PS BROADER GRASSROOTS BASE. ONE RESULT COULD BE TO MAKE PS A MORE EXIGENT PARTNER FOR ITS ALLIES OF THE UNITED LEFT, THE PC AND LEFT RADICALS. COMMUNISTS DID LESS WELL THAN THEY HAD HOPED ALTHOUGH THEY SCORED SOME GAINS. THE PC LEADERSHIP WILL HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO THE FAITHFUL WHY THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PC DID SO MUCH LESS WELL THAN THE PS, AND THAT DESPITE THE GOOD COMMUNIST RECORD IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND PC SUPERB ORGANIZATION. THE PARTIES OF THE MAJORITY GAINED LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF REFORMERS AND INDEPENDENT CADIDATES FROM THE CENTER. CANDIDATES RUNNING UNDER REFORMIST LABEL BARELY HELD THEIR OWN. THUS, THE INCREASED TREND TO BIPOLARIZATION IN FRENCH POLITICS, AS NOTED IN THE MARCH LEGISTLATIVE ELECTIONS, HAS CONTINUED. THE SOCIALISTS, IN PORTRAYING THEMSELVES AS A NON-MARXIST, CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE

TO THE MAJORITY, HAVE BEEN THE PRIMARY BENEFICIAIRES OF THIS TREND. PS HAS ALSO BEEN ENGAGED IN MAJOR RECRUITING EFFORTS THROUGHTOUT FRANCE.

5. HIGH RATE OF ABSTENTION IN BOTH ROUNDS AND LACK OF ANY REAL POWERS OF DEPARTMENTAL COUNCILS LIMITS IMPORTANCE OF RESULTS ON NATIONAL LEVEL. LEFT WING PARTIES WILL CONSIDER RESULTS AS PLEBISCITE ON GOF POLICIES AND WILL CLAIM A VICTORY. IN FACT, HOWEVER, GIVEN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY LOCAL ISSUES ON WHICH MOST CANDIATES RUN (NOTE THE LARGE NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS CLAIMING NO PARTY AFFILIATION), IT PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY THAT ELECTION RESULTS SHOW ONLY SLIGHT DECLINE IN GOVERNMENT POPULARITY, AND MODERATE INCREASE IN PS POPULARITY. GOF NOT IN ANY EVENT REQUIRED TO CHANGE ANY OF ITS POLICIES AS A RESULT OF OUTCOME, THOUGH IT CAN HARDLY FIND RESULTS TO ITS LIKING. IN PARTICULAR, REINFORCEMENT OF MITERRAND'S POSITION WORRISOME TO GOF.

IRWIN

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